

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Applicant respectfully requests that this listing of claims replace the prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently amended) A method for concealing the true identity of a user in a communications system ~~comprising a first user equipment having a first characteristic identifier, a second user equipment having a second characteristic identifier, a service network serving the first and the second user equipment~~, the method comprising:

~~requesting a virtual identifier by means of the first user equipment;~~

establishing ~~[[the]]a~~ virtual identifier for ~~[[the]]a~~ first user equipment in at least one of the following: the first user equipment and the service network;

linking the virtual identifier of the first user equipment to ~~[[the]]a~~ first characteristic identifier of the first user equipment; and

using the virtual identifier of the first user equipment for communication between the first and ~~[[the]]a~~ second user equipment.

2. (Currently amended) ~~[[A]]The~~ method of claim 1, the method further comprising requesting the virtual identifier from ~~[[the]]a~~ service network of the communications system.

3. (Currently amended) ~~[[A]]The~~ method of claim 1, the method further comprising requesting multiple virtual identifiers from ~~[[the]]a~~ service network of the communications system.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently amended) ~~[[A]]The~~ method of claim 1, ~~wherein the~~ method further comprising providing service network comprises a set of virtual identifiers in a service network of the

communications system, one or more of ~~which are~~ the virtual identifiers being linked to the first characteristic identifier of the first user equipment.

6. (Currently amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The method of claim 1, the method further comprising selecting, in ~~[[the]]~~ a service network of the communications system, the virtual identifier to be used for communication between the first and the second user equipment.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The method of claim 1, the method further comprising ~~transmitting to the~~ receiving at a service network of the communications system a request for establishing a communications connection between the first and the second user equipment, the request comprising the virtual identifier of the first user equipment.

9. (Currently amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The method of claim 8, the method further comprising ~~receiving using a short message service for transmitting~~ the request for establishing the communications connection between the first and the second user equipment via a short message service.

10. (Currently amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The method of claim 8, the method further comprising ~~receiving using an electronic mail server service for transmitting~~ the request for establishing the communications connection between the first and the second user equipment via an electronic mail server service.

11. (Currently amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The method of claim 8, the method further comprising ~~receiving~~ transmitting the request for establishing the communications connection between the first and the second user equipment from the second user equipment.

12. (Currently amended) ~~[[A]]~~The method of claim 11, the method further comprising receiving, in the first user equipment, information about the use of the virtual identifier of the first user equipment.

13. (Currently amended) ~~[[A]]~~The method of claim 1, the method further comprising predetermining a given validity period ~~during which~~of the virtual identifier ~~is valid~~.

14. (Currently amended) ~~[[A]]~~The method of claim 1, the method further comprising predetermining one or more user equipment that have the right to use the virtual identifier.

15. (Currently amended) ~~An arrangement~~A system for concealing the true identity of a user in a communications system ~~comprising: a first user equipment having a first characteristic identifier, a second user equipment having a second characteristic identifier, a service network connecting the first and the second user equipment~~, wherein the ~~arrangement~~system is configured to:

~~request a virtual identifier by means of the first user equipment;~~

establish ~~[[the]]~~a virtual identifier for ~~[[the]]~~a first user equipment in at least one of the following: the first user equipment and the service network;

link the virtual identifier of the first user equipment to ~~[[the]]~~a first characteristic identifier of the first user equipment; and

use the virtual identifier of the first user equipment for communication between the first and ~~[[the]]~~a second user equipment.

16. (Currently amended) ~~An arrangement~~The system of claim 15, wherein the ~~arrangement~~system is configured to request the virtual identifier from ~~[[the]]~~a service network of the communications system.

17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently amended) ~~An arrangement~~The system of claim 15, wherein the ~~arrangements~~system is configured to establish multiple virtual identifiers in ~~[[the]]a~~ service network of the communications system.

19. (Currently amended) ~~An arrangement~~The system of claim 15, wherein ~~[[the]]a~~ service network of the communications system comprises a set of virtual identifiers and the ~~arrangements~~system is configured to link one or more of the virtual identifiers to the first characteristic identifier of the first user equipment.

20. (Currently amended) ~~An arrangement~~The system of claim 15, wherein the ~~arrangements~~system is configured to transmit to ~~[[the]]a~~ service network of the communications system a request for establishing a communications connection between the first and the second user equipment, the request comprising the virtual identifier of the first user equipment.

21. (Currently amended) A user equipment, ~~comprising a first characteristic identifier, the user equipment communicating via a service network with a second user equipment having a second characteristic identifier,~~ wherein the user equipment is configured to:

establish a virtual identifier ~~for the user equipment~~ in at least one of the following:
the first user equipment and the service network;

link the virtual identifier of the user equipment to ~~[[the]]a~~ first characteristic identifier of the user equipment; and

use the virtual identifier of the user equipment for communication between the user equipment and ~~[[the]]a~~ second user equipment.

22. (Previously presented) The user equipment of claim 21, wherein the user equipment is configured to establish multiple virtual identifiers.

23. (Currently amended) The user equipment of claim 21, wherein the user equipment is configured to receive information about the use of the virtual identifier linked to the first characteristic identifier of the user equipment from ~~[[the]]a~~ service network of the communications system when a connection is established between the user equipment and the second user equipment.

24-29. (Canceled)

30. (Currently amended) A ~~service~~method for concealing the true identity of a user in a communications system ~~that includes a first user equipment having a first characteristic identifier, a second user equipment having a second characteristic identifier, a service network connecting the first and the second user equipment,~~ the method comprising:

establishing a connection between ~~[[the]]a~~ first user equipment and ~~[[the]]a~~ second user equipment when a virtual identifier established for the first user equipment in at least one of the following: the first user equipment and the service network, and linked to ~~[[the]]a~~ first characteristic identifier of the first user equipment is used by the second user equipment for establishing a connection to the first user equipment.

31. (Currently amended) An apparatus~~A server in a service network of a communications system comprising: a first user equipment having a first characteristic identifier, a second user equipment having a second characteristic identifier, the service network connecting the first and the second user equipment,~~ wherein the ~~server~~apparatus is configured to:

establish a virtual identifier for ~~[[the]]a~~ first user equipment in at least one of the following: the first user equipment and the service network; and

link the virtual identifier of the first user equipment to ~~[[the]]a~~ first characteristic identifier of the first user equipment for enabling the use of the virtual identifier of the first user equipment for communication between the first and ~~[[the]]a~~ second user equipment.

32. (Currently amended) The serverapparatus of claim 31, wherein the serverapparatus comprises a database of available virtual identifiers.

33. (Currently amended) The serverapparatus of claim 31, wherein the serverapparatus is further configured to send the virtual identifier to the first user equipment via a short message service.

34. (Currently amended) An apparatus~~A server in a service network of a communications system comprising: a first user equipment having a first characteristic identifier, a second user equipment having a second characteristic identifier, the service network connecting the first and the second user equipment,~~ wherein the serverapparatus is configured to:

link a virtual identifier established for ~~[[the]]~~a first user equipment in at least one of the following: the first user equipment and ~~[[the]]~~a service network to ~~[[the]]~~a first characteristic identifier of the first user equipment for enabling the use of the virtual identifier of the first user equipment for communication between the first and ~~[[the]]~~a second user equipment.

35. (Currently amended) The serverapparatus of claim 34, wherein the serverapparatus is further configured to compare a virtual identifier received from the first user equipment or the second user equipment with characteristic identifiers linked to virtual identifiers in a database of the serverapparatus for enabling establishing a connection between the first user equipment and the second user equipment.

36. (Currently amended) An apparatus~~A database in a service network of a communications system comprising: a first user equipment having a first characteristic identifier, a second user equipment having a second characteristic identifier, the service network connecting the first and the second user equipment,~~ wherein the ~~database comprises~~apparatus is configured to store a list of virtual identifiers wherein one or more virtual identifiers established for ~~[[the]]~~a user equipment in at least one of the following: the first user equipment and

[[the]]a service network are ~~stored and~~ linked to [[the]] respective characteristic identifiers of the user equipment, and where virtual identifiers received from the first user equipment or a second user equipment are compared with the characteristic identifiers linked to the virtual identifiers for enabling the use of the virtual identifiers for communication between the first and the second user equipment.